



Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Testimony of Atty. Shirley M. Pripstein
Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Inc.

Re: SB 1029 AN ACT CONCERNING A NONADVERSARIAL DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

Judiciary Committee
March 11, 2015

Recommended Action:	AMEND THE BILL
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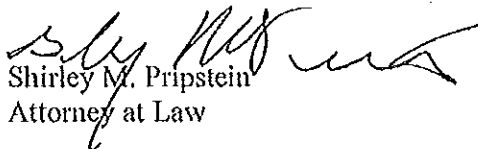
My name is Shirley Pripstein I am an attorney who has practiced exclusively the area of divorce and family law for over 34 years. I am a past president of the Family law Section of the CBA. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Connecticut Legal Services. We represent indigent persons in the family courts throughout the State of Connecticut.

This bill would allow for an administrative divorce within 30 days of return date upon submission of a signed written agreement, under oath, in cases where marriage is not longer than eight years and nine other enumerated criteria are met. Among the enumerated criteria are no children, no real property, and no assets in excess of \$35,000. Noticeably missing from the criteria list is the requirement that neither party have a pension plan.

Teachers, policemen, firemen, and state employees all have pension plans, as do employees of Pratt-Whitney, The Aetna, The Hartford, and other large employers in our state. A pension plan is a valuable asset that is frequently overlooked by parties because it is not currently available cash, but since 1983 pension plans have been divisible by Qualified Domestic Relations Order. In legal aid cases, pension plans are often the only or the most valuable asset. The bill should be amended by adding 'neither party has a pension plan' to the list of criteria that must be met before the parties can obtain a non-adversarial divorce.

Another concern is that the bill does not require the appearance of both parties at the courthouse at some point in time in order for their identity to be verified. At a time when we are all routinely required to show our drivers licenses or other proof of identification before obtaining medical treatment, there should be some requirement for identification verification of the parties prior to the entry of a divorce decree in order to prevent fraud.

Legal service attorneys who practice in the area of family law are supportive of the concept of non-adversarial divorce. The bill should be amended as we suggest and acted upon favorably.


Shirley M. Pripstein
Attorney at Law

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